

The Train  
is coming!



King County

# 5TH DISTRICT NEWS



A REPORT FROM KING COUNTY COUNCILMEMBER DWIGHT PELZ

January 2004

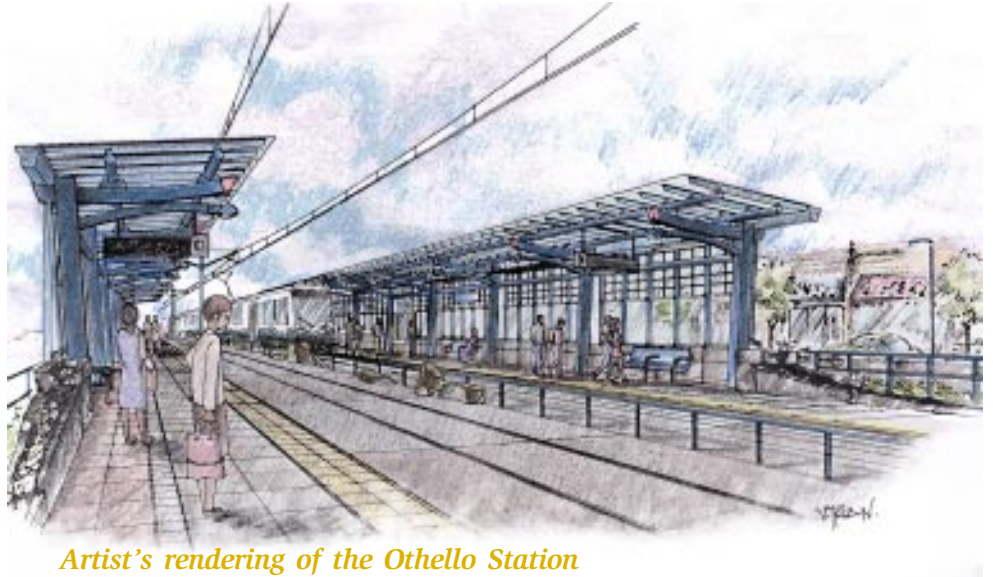
## Light Rail to be built!

It is now official – light rail will be built. The Federal Transit Agency announced on October 24, 2003 that Sound Transit will receive \$500 million for its light rail line. Sound Transit immediately broke ground at the future location of the light rail maintenance base, across the street from the old Rainier Brewery.

The initial “Central Link” light rail segment will run 14 miles from Westlake Station in downtown Seattle, to South 154th Street, connecting by shuttle bus to Sea-Tac Airport. The heart of the light rail alignment will serve the Rainier Valley and Beacon Hill with frequent trains that will give residents a congestion free alternative to reach their jobs, schools, and other important destinations.

Sound Transit will be making a huge investment in Southeast Seattle. Construction in the Rainier Valley will begin in 2004, starting with the relocation of utilities. The existing overhead utilities will be buried underground with most of the current wood poles removed. Most of the public and private utility services along Martin Luther King (MLK) Way — water, storm, sewer, and gas lines — will be replaced.

Once the overhead utilities are moved underground, construction will begin on street improvements. This will include a new roadway, sidewalks, driveways, curbs, gutters, landscaping and other



*Artist's rendering of the Othello Station*

urban amenities. Next, the pavement in the center of the street will be excavated and the track bed prepared. At the same time, stations will be constructed and electrical systems that power the trains will be installed. Finally, the testing of the system will take place in the final year before opening in late 2008 or early 2009.

Sound Transit is working closely with the City of Seattle to ensure that traffic flow will be maintained in both directions on MLK throughout construction. Sound Transit has also worked with the Seattle Fire Department, the Seattle Police Department and the Seattle Department of Transportation to develop a comprehensive street plan for MLK. That plan addresses traffic, signals, lighting, pedestrian crossings, safety and emergency access, on-street parking and other roadway features.

Four stations will serve the Rainier Valley: McClellan Station, Edmunds/Columbia City Station, Othello Station, and Henderson Station. Additionally, there will be a Beacon Hill station that will improve connections between the Rainier Valley and Beacon Hill. The stations, complete with public art and landscaping, will include platforms to wait for trains, ticket machines, canopies, and benches.

It has been a long and contentious process to get to groundbreaking on this project. Opponents and supporters of light rail through the Valley have helped make this a better project through their observations and input. We now have a light rail plan that will be a fantastic asset for the residents of Southeast Seattle and will help us continue to develop a community of which we are all proud.

# Light Rail Safety

There has been considerable discussion of the safety of light rail going through the Rainier Valley. National studies show that electric light rail trains are safer than cars, trucks and even buses.

The light rail alignment through the Valley uses state-of-the-art technological and design techniques to ensure safety for pedestrians, vehicles and transit users. Sound Transit has studied light rail in other cities and has worked closely with the Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle Fire Department and the Seattle Police Department over the past several years to design a system that will enhance safety and ensure prompt emergency access.

In response to community concerns, Sound Transit is adding 18 signalized intersections and 10 pedestrian-only intersections to Martin Luther King Jr. Way South where there are currently very few pedestrian crossings. Traffic signals will be timed to allow for both reliable, on-time train connections and easy passage of vehicles moving through the Valley.

Trains will move on a raised median clearly marked with colored pavers to distinguish them from traffic lanes. There will be two traffic lanes in each direction and Sound Transit will be using an innovative Z-shaped crosswalk with a safe place for pedestrians to wait if they are unable to cross the entire street. Street improvements such as enlarged sidewalks, lighting, benches, landscaping and art have all been designed with improving safety in mind.



*Central Link initial segment*

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*Seattle Renton & Southern Streetcar #106, circa 1910.  
Photo courtesy of the Rainier Valley Historical Society.*

## Community Development Fund

In the Fall of 1999, the Sound Transit Board, King County, and the City of Seattle established the Rainier Valley Community Development Fund (CDF). In 2002, they began contributing a total of \$50 million dollars over a seven-year period to help those businesses impacted by light rail and to promote economic development in the community.

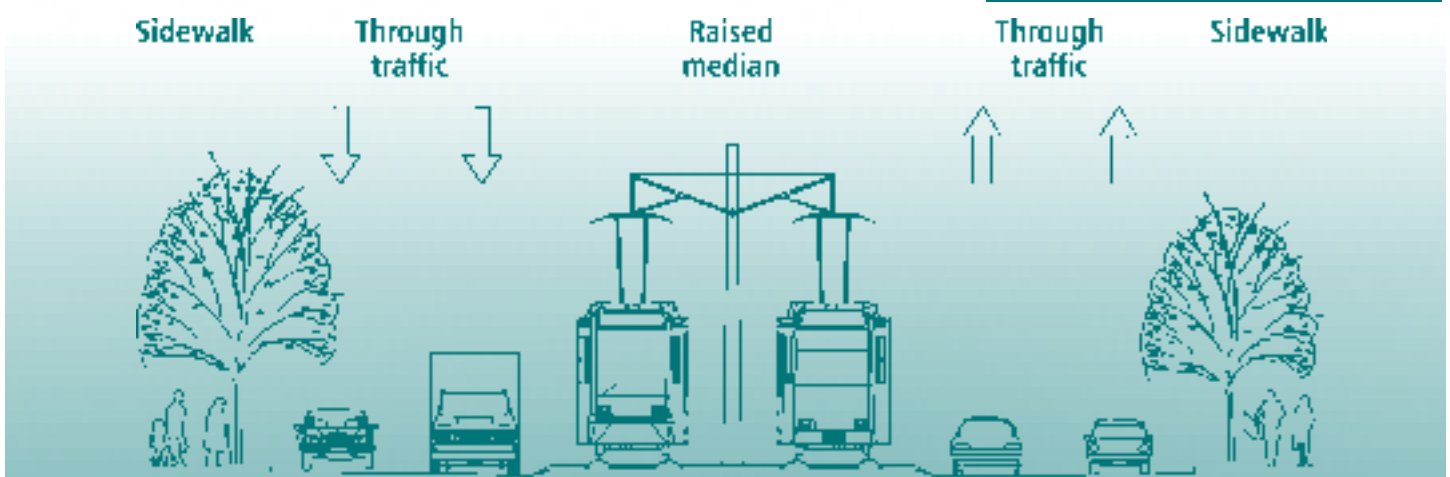
The goal is to make the CDF a self-sustaining fund that preserves and strengthens diversity, livability, and economic opportunity for residents and businesses in the Rainier Valley.

In June the CDF made its first loan to a business which borrowed money to help it relocate from the light rail alignment to a location near Rainier Avenue. This business took advantage of the need to relocate and went from being a tenant to becoming a property owner.

The CDF is community governed by a seven member board of directors, and the staff members are Fred Cooper (Executive Director), Diane Davies, Charlette (Charlie) Black, Nam-Huan Do, Carlos Gasca and Katherine Bush. To reach the Rainier Valley Community Development Fund call 722-5280.



*Artist's rendering of the Link light rail train*





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# The Train is Coming!

**As your representative on the King County Council and as a member of the Sound Transit Board, I am proud to have played a role in bringing light rail to South Seattle.**